AgFuture

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FFA Back in Indy

SOUTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
VOLUME: 4 ISSUE: 3 2022

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[illegible] Program Director

From the State Director

Troy Helms

Embrace the Past. Build for the Future

John F. Kennedy once said ,"We celebrate the past to awaken the future." What we do today, in this moment, should be celebrated tomorrow and what we do tomorrow should be inspired and motivated by what was done today. I really have to slow down and think through each of the words written above to truly grasp their meaning. What was done many, many years ago by those before us is just as important to our existence as what we will do today.

I am so excited, just as you are, that we now seem to be coming out of a pandemic that has forever changed our lives and, in many cases, how we live and function each and every day. As schools have opened back up and COVID protocols have been loosened, it has been amazing to see the excitement as teachers and students engage in more in-person activities. It is important that we always remember the missed conversations, the social interaction and the relationships with each other during the pandemic and look to value and hold dear these interactions in the future. We must look to and learn from the past to know the valu of our future.

It is very rewarding to know that agricultural education in South Carolina did not stop during the pandemic. While we had to adapt and make changes to what we were doing, our opportunities for students offered locally within the schools and across the state did not waiver. The ag ed family came together, strapped on their boots and continued to educate, build relationships with and provide opportunities to our students across the state. Our students discovered new ways to stay engaged, developed or continued Supervised Agricultural Experiences in ways they weren't accustomed to, and found ways to connect to members from all across the state and to continue growing as leaders. Each of us took what was done in the pas and adapted to meet each of our needs.

Through all that we have been through in the past two years, we never would have gotten to where we are today without a solid past and strong foundation. A foundation that was built many, many years ago that has stayed solid and held true for decades. A foundation that was built by the hands of many. A past that was onc someone's future, became their present, and then a part of their history and legac

As we move into the future I challenge each of you, myself included, to accep and appreciate the responsibility of where you are today, for today will soon be your past. Embrace, learn from and celebrate those things that have come before us and kept us strong. Let's awaken the future with our actions, our decisions, our relationships, and our enthusiasm. As the past has taught us, we don't know what the future holds but the foundation we build can sustain us and move us forward.

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AgFuture is published three times a year by Clemson University PSA Publishing. For more information, please contact the State Director, William Keels, at wkeels@clemson.edu.

94th National FFA Convention Back in Person

By Jillian Lash

After hosting a virtual FFA Convention in 2020, The National FFA Convention was held back in person this past fall in Indianapolis, Indiana. The event brought in over 50,000 attendees during the week of Oct. 27-30.

The in-person events during the convention included the American FFA Degree Ceremony, Career Success Tours, competitive events, delegate business sessions, the National FFA Expo and shopping mall, general sessions, student and teacher workshops, and the National Days of Service.

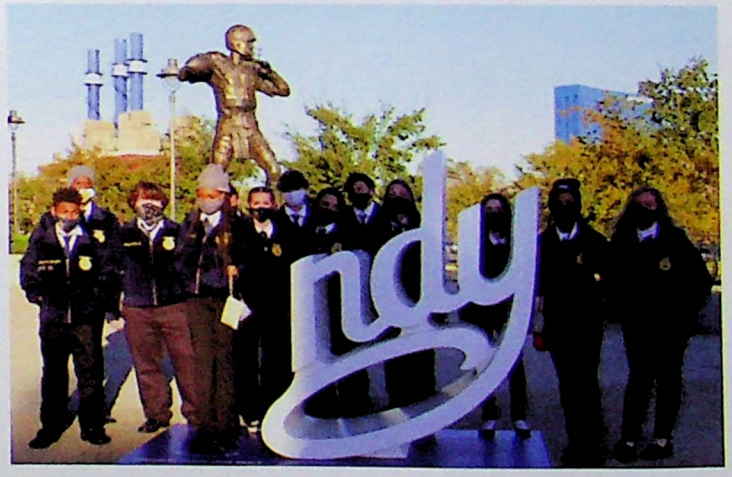
FFA members had a chance to also participate in a number of activities outside of the convention sessions. Activities included a great concert featuring Brett Young, the World's Toughest Rodeo, the Indianapolis Zoo, The Indianapolis Motor Speedway home of the "Indy 500," the National FFA Center plus multiple agritourism farms in the Indianapolis area to visit.

The National Convention and Expo kicked off with the National FFA Band leading the grand march of state flags to usher in the start of the Opening Session. Bailee Ferich of the Loris FFA Chapter proudly carried the SC State Flag. All general sessions were held at the Lucas Oil Stadium.

The Convention & Expo featured the first-ever onsite National Days of Service event, including two projects for attendees to participate in. During the national convention, members had the opportunity to build and paint 100 Little Free Pantries – which resemble tiny houses filled with donated non-perishable food items and hygiene products. Once completed, the boxes will be placed around Indianapolis. In addition, convention attendees wrote cards to go in meal boxes for Meals on Wheels of Central Indiana. Traditionally, during the National Days of Service, participants go out into the community to complete service projects, but due to the lingering effects of Covid-19, this year's Day of Service was moved indoors.

In addition to the in-person convention, the National FFA offered a virtual program, including student and teacher workshops, the virtual FFA Blue Room, National Days of Service and the streaming of general sessions.

The 2022 National FFA Convention is scheduled for October 26-29 in Indianapolis.



SC FFA members from across the state in Indianapolis for the 2021 National FFA Convention and Expo.

South Carolina FFA On the National Stage

By Jillian Lash & Jason Gore

SCFFA chapters and members from around the state competed on the national level this past fall at the National FFA Convention. National FFA adjusted CDE's and LDE's this year to reduce the number of people in attendance at the National FFA Convention and allow those states and chapters an opportunity to compete even if they are not allowed to travel due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Most CDE's written test was administered in the early fall. The top chapters placing in the CDE written test advanced to the in-person event at the National FFA Convention. The preliminary rounds of the Leadership Development Events, or LDE's such as Prepared Public Speaking or Creed, competed virtually. A few select FFA members advanced to the semi-final rounds in person. One LDE competitor advanced to the semi-final round of the FFA Creed Speaking LDE. Porter Hand of the Palmetto FFA Chapter presented the FFA Creed in person, earning him a Silver medal.

Congratulations to the following chapters and FFA members on their national recognition this past fall.

Agricultural Technology and Mechanical Systems – Governor's School for Agriculture – Bronze

Agronomy – McBee – Bronze

Conduct of Chapter Meetings – Pelion Middle – Bronze

Creed Speaking – Porter Hand, Palmetto – Silver

Dairy Cattle Evaluation & Management – Indian Land – Bronze

Employment Skills – Claire McAtee, Pickens Co. CTC – Bronze

Environmental & Natural Resources – Governor's School for Agriculture – Bronze

Extemporaneous Public Speaking – Wyatt Spearman, Blue Ridge – Bronze

Farm & Agribusiness Management – Thurmond – Bronze

Floriculture – Woodmont – Bronze

Forestry – BHP – Bronze

Horse Evaluation – Pickens Co. CTC – Bronze

Livestock Evaluation – Saluda – Bronze

Milk Quality & Products – Lexington Technology Center – Bronze

Nursery/Landscape – BHP – Silver

Parliamentary Procedure – Calhoun Falls – Bronze

Poultry Evaluation – Pickens Co. CTC – Silver

Prepared Public Speaking – Lacy Latham, Thurmond – Bronze

Veterinary Science – Thurmond – Bronze

Agriscience

Animal Systems – Division 6

Valeria Lafontaine & Margaret Hollingsworth, Governor's School for Agriculture

Bronze Rating

Environmental Services and Natural Resource Systems – Division 5

Aestas Hodge, Governor's School for Agriculture

Bronze Rating

Food Products and Processing Systems – Division 1

Cassandra Wagner, Woodmont Middle

Silver Rating

Food Products and Processing Systems – Division 5

Estreya Cabrera-Lopez, Manning

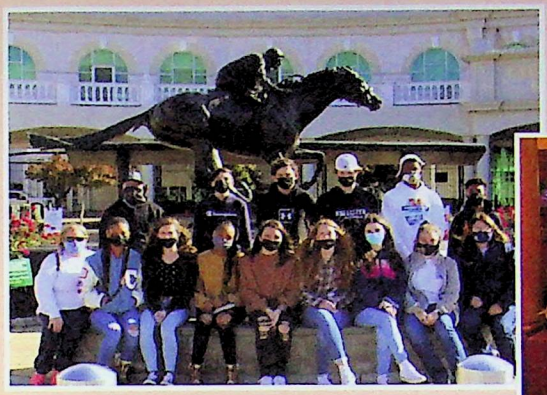
Bronze Rating

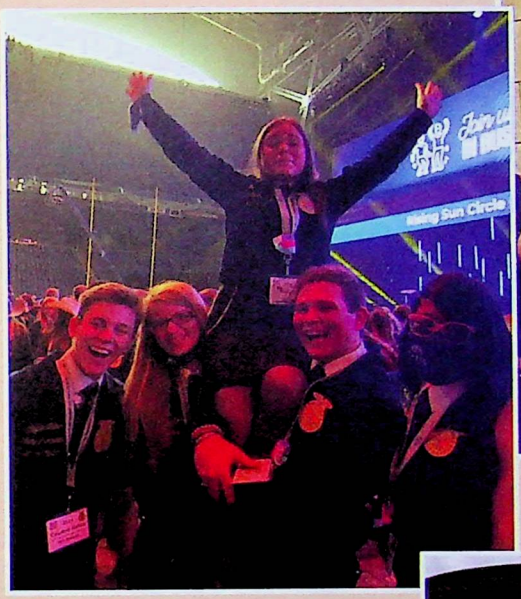
Social Science – Division 1

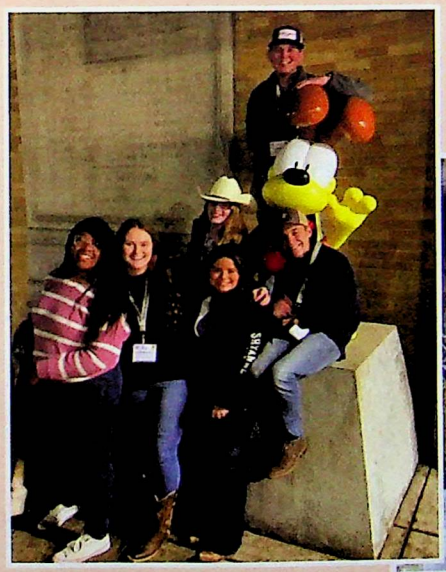
Tyler Adkins, Woodmont Middle

Silver Rating

Photo Highlights from the **National Convention**







CAFLS Alumni Football Tailgate

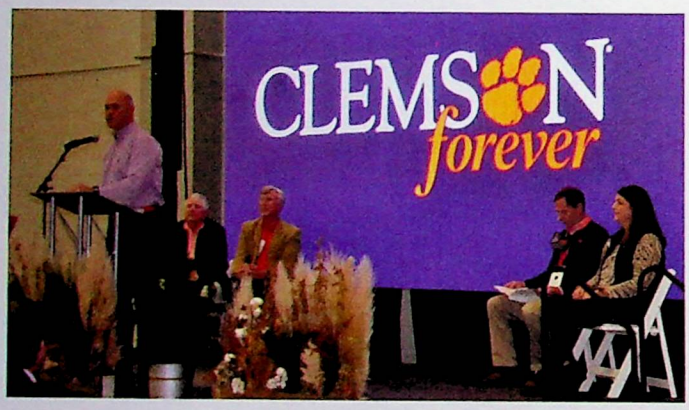
By Jillian Lash

Hundreds of FFA members from across the state had the opportunity travel to the Clemson this fall to experience the annual College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences Alumni Tailgate and Clemson football game.

A brief program was held to recognize those alumni who made an impact on the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences program over the past year. The highlight of the program was the recognition of Clemson University alumni Johnny and Kristen Evans for gifting $1 million to help establish the Boone and Crocket Wildlife Conservation Program at Clemson University. This program will provide support for applied research that informs and educates the next generation of wildlife management professionals.

FFA members had the opportunity to network with CAFLS alumni and visit exhibits by majors and programs from the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences along with many agriculture agencies and agribusinesses from around South Carolina.

The CAFLS Tailgate is sponsored by South Carolina Farm Bureau. Other sponsors included: Ag South Farm Credit, Arbor One Farm Credit, Covered in Cotton, McLeod Farms and Mixon Seed Service, Inc.



"It's Your Moment" - Welcome Back to FFA Day at the State Fair

By Jillian Lash

Back in person, on Oct. 19, hundreds of FFA members and advisors gathered in the Abernathy Arena for the Association of State Fairs Scholarship ceremony and to be welcomed to the 2021 State Fair by Nancy Smith, general manager.

After the ceremony, FFA members had the chance to participate in or watch the Tractor Operation and Safety Career Development Event, visit livestock, explore horticulture exhibits and simply enjoy the food and fun that the State Fair has to offer. All those who attended stated they were excited to be back at the fair in person.

The State Fair has a long-standing tradition of successfully promoting the FFA. The State Fair hosted the organizational meeting of the Future Palmetto Farmers at the 1927 fair. This was the forerunner of the South Carolina Association of Future Farmers of America, known today as the South Carolina FFA Association.

2021 South Carolina State Fair Scholarship Recipients

By Jillian Lash

Four outstanding FFA members were awarded a $500 South Carolina Association of Fairs Scholarship during the FFA ceremony at the State Fair in October. The purpose of this scholarship is to offer an incentive to students that are well rounded in their Supervised Agricultural Experience, FFA leadership, school and community activities and scholastic ability. The FFA members were presented their scholarship by Nancy Smith, president of the SCAF before a crowd of FFA members, agricultural educators and sponsors.

Whitner Bobo is a member of the Belton Honea Path FFA Chapter. Whitner is a member of the Belton Honea Path FFA Chapter. She is very active not only in her FFA Chapter as Chapter Secretary but also is a member of several school and community organizations. Her SAE consists of working on her family's farm, which consists of 175 head of Black Angus and Charolais Cattle, 35 head of Boer goats and 90 acres of Bermuda Grass Fescue and Coastal Bermudagrass Hay. Whitner plans to attend Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and obtain a degree in Crop Science. Whitner's advisors are Deion Latimer, Ben Woody and Eric Wilson.

From L to R: Westin Sandifer – Barnwell FFA Chapter, Whitner Bobo – Belton Honea Path FFA Chapter, Nancy Smith, Director of the SC State Fair and President of the South Carolina Association of Fairs, Carolina Baron – Union FFA Chapter, Bailee Ferich – Loris FFA Chapter

Caroline Baron is a member of the Union FFA Chapter. As chapter president, she helps coordinate and plan all chapter activities, while working a diverse SAE, consisting of rabbit and pig projects and raising bees. She has been involved in many different FFA activities at the local and state level. Caroline plans to attend USC Upstate and enroll in their pre-chiropractic program then will transfer to Sherman University to become a certified animal chiropractic. Her advisors are Jeffery Whisenhunt and Ashley Dill.

Bailee Ferich is a member of the Loris FFA Chapter and serves as chapter president. Bailee's involvement is abundant in many FFA events on the local, state and national levels. Participating in State CDE's and placing top 10 in the state in Creed, Prepared Public Speaking and WHEP while working on her Small Animal Care and Ag Sales SAE. Bailee plans on becoming an agriculture teacher after graduating from college. Her advisors are Clair Hammonds and Brooke Hall.

Weston Sandifer is a member of the Barnwell County Career Center FFA Chapter. As chapter vice president, he has been involved with many FFA local and state events. His SAE experiences include assisting in running the family row crop operation of 1,000 acres of corn, wheat and cotton as well as operating a cow-calf operation and two breeder houses with almost 10,000 chickens in each. Weston also participated in multiple FFA community service projects such as Meals of Hope and Adopt-A-Highway. Weston plans to attend Clemson University after graduation majoring in Agricultural Mechanization & Business. His advisor is Mindy Sandifer.

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Helms Named State Director of Agricultural Education

After performing a national search and utilizing a search committee of key leaders in agricultural education in South Carolina, Clemson named Troy Helms as state director of agricultural education in South Carolina and program team director of agricultural education with Clemson Extension.

Helms has a Bachelor of Science in Ag Ed from Clemson University, a Master of Education in Divergent Learning from Columbia College.

Helms has a successful teaching career in South Carolina, spanning 17 years. He began his teaching career in 2002 at Indian Land High School, where he taught Agriculture for seven years, along with Jerry Davis. In 2009, Helms moved to Buford High School, where he taught Agriculture for 10 years.

Prior to coming to Clemson, Helms has demonstrated success in the classroom and the FFA. Helms had many recognitions during his teaching tenor, most notably, he was named Lancaster County District Teacher of the Year in 2018, SC Region III Outstanding Agriculture Educator in 2019 and his chapter received a gold emblem award in National Chapter in 2019 at the State FFA Convention. Helms also served as a National DuPont Agriscience Ambassador for South Carolina.

In 2019, Helms was named regional coordinator for agricultural education in South Carolina. During his time with Clemson, he successful evaluated programs in his regions as well as worked to assist teachers in navigating through the COVID pandemic and meet the challenges of eLearning.

Helms also served as executive director of the Farmer and Agribusiness Association, where he quickly assisted in stabilizing the association budget and provided necessary leadership for the executive committee, especially during the pandemic. Helms also, against all odds, successfully worked with the Orangeburg Farmer and Agribusiness Chapter to conduct an in-person summer tour, despite COVID restrictions. Helms also served on the NYFEA National Board representing the state advisors, and successfully served on the Awards and Recognition Committee.

Helms was named to the position after the retirement of Billy Keels. Keels retired from his position as state director of agricultural education in South Carolina on Oct. 1, 2021 after 37 years of service to agricultural education. Keels served as state director 18 years after serving six years as regional coordinator of agricultural education and 13 years of teaching agriculture in South Carolina.

Helms will be housed in the Columbia area where he can provide leadership for the entire state while also working closely with the SC Department of Education.

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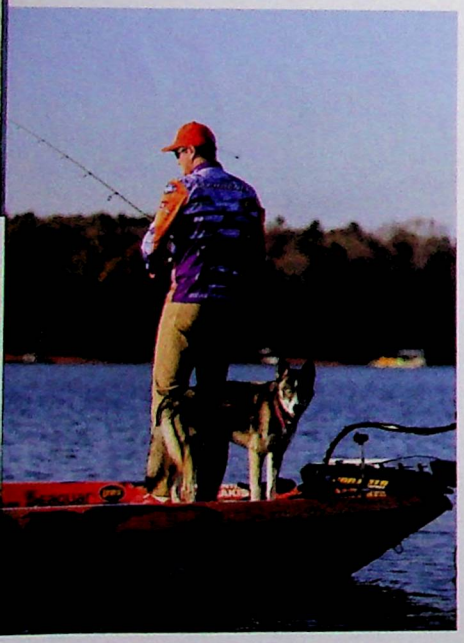

Brodie had always loved the outdoors, plants — and the FFA. When he came to Clemson he found that all his interests could come together in one even bigger passion — feeding the world.

At Clemson, Brodie conducted research on plant pathology with professors who shared his goals. He then applied that research to the campus' Tiger Gardens where he also taught nutrition and sustainable practices in elemetary schools. Brodie also enjoys time outside of the classroom as a member of the Bass Fishing Team.

Now in graduate school at Clemson, Brodie hopes to travel the world to help others tackle the challenge of dependable access to food. It's a big task. But with knowledge, enthusiasm and the support of his mentors, Brodie is up to the challenge.

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Aynor Wins Soil Evaluation CDE

By Jason Gore

The Aynor FFA Chapter finished first overall in the 2021 Soil Evaluation CDE held Nov. 6 in Latta. Members competing in this event are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of soil science through identifying and classifying four soil sites and then making recommendations for best site use based on provided scenarios.

Members of the Aynor team were Morgan Cook, Jesse Johnson, Railey Benton and Riley Atkinson. James Roberts and Rose Jordan are the advisors for the chapter.

Belton Honea Path, second overall, and Calhoun Falls, third overall, were recognized as top teams. Top performing individuals were Morgan Cook (Aynor), 1st Place Individual; Keegan Curry (Calhoun Falls), 2nd Place Individual; and Carter Senf (Gilbert), 3rd Place Individual.

Aynor and Belton Honea Path will both advance to the National Land and Range Judging Competition to be held in Oklahoma City this Spring.

The SC FFA Tractor Safety and Operations CDE is sponsored by the SC FFA Foundation and is conducted with assistance from the South Carolina NRCS.

Laurens Wins Tractor Safety and Operations CDE

By Jason Gore

The Laurens FFA Chapter placed first overall out of over 40 participating chapters in the 2021 SC FFA Tractor Safety and Operations CDE held Oct. 19 at the SC State Fair. Participating members demonstrated the ability to safely operate equipment through completing a timed driving course with penalties assessed for failing to observe safe operating practices or deviations from the course pattern.

Members of the Laurens team were Hayden McHone, Tucker McHone, Ben Thomason and Luke Pelion. Kyle Penland and Melanie Birchmore are the advisors for the chapter.

Wagener-Salley, second overall, and the South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture, third overall, were recognized as well. Top performing individuals were Jeffrey Henderson (Belton Honea Path), 1st Place Individual; Tucker McHone (Laurens), 2nd Place Individual; and Kaden McDonald (Pelion), 3rd Place Individual.

The SC FFA Tractor Safety and Operations CDE is sponsored by STEC, Inc.

Grazing the Bar

By Jillian Lash

The SC FFA State Officers held their annual Chapter Opportunity Workshops this fall, both in-person and virtually. From 75 chapters, 298 chapters officers attended the in-person events around the state, while 234 officers attended virtually. The state officers focused on how officers can effectively work together as a team. Activities included understanding commitment, respect, being on point and vulnerability, all important factors that make an officer team successful.

Thank you to Hillcrest High School, Laurens High School, Cheraw High School and Lowcountry Leadership for hosting this year's workshops.

Swansea FFA

Through the Eyes of its Members

By Lauren Knight, Swansea FFA Chapter President and Emma Lucas, Swansea FFA Chapter Reporter

When asked what makes Swansea FFA such a great club to be a part of at Swansea High School, students give similar answers. The family feel, fellowship of members and good food are always on the list of reasons to join. With about 50 current chapter members, our club participates in community service, chapter development and agriculture advocation events.

Swansea FFA prides itself on serving our local community. Once each semester, the chapter hosts a roadside cleanup on a populated road in front of one of our schools and our town's recreational sports complex. Members enjoy the outdoor and social time during the cleanup.

They always say, "There's strength in numbers." This is particularly true when our chapter rallies together to support the community. This October we participated in the Scarecrow Showdown event hosted by our Swansea community leaders. The purpose of the event was to raise canned food items for our local food pantries. Swansea FFA came in third place with a whopping 626 cans.

This holiday season, Swansea FFA ramped up its community involvement even more. We participated in the town's annual Christmas parade (one of our chapter's favorite activities). Afterward, we took the time to show our support for the local fire and police departments. We served our first responders warm chili after a cold day outside for the parade. Two weeks later, we entered a holiday light display in our community's Drive-Through Lights Show. This particular day was also the end of our Christmas Toy Drive for the oncology floor of Prisma Children's Hospital in Columbia. Each year the officer team delivers the toys collected from our community and chapter members. This project is near and dear to our hearts since we lost a member to childhood cancer years ago and we have two former FFA members who are cancer survivors or still living with cancer. Swansea FFA has participated in and created many service opportunities that our small-town community loves and appreciates! One thing that our ag teacher and FFA Advisor, Mrs. Still, says at the beginning of each year is, "If you don't learn anything else, you will learn to be a good person and give back to others," and that is exactly what we do in our chapter.

Advocating and teaching our school about agriculture is something we are proud of here at Swansea. We recently had a group of Ag Mech students construct a brand-new hydroponics system in our greenhouse. Alongside this, our aquaponics system will soon be up and running as well. Using these methods of cultivation, we successfully host plant sales for our community. A variety of flowers and vegetables are sold from our greenhouse in order to support our chapter. We use these plants for school beautification as well. FFA is in charge of many pots,

planters, and flower beds around Swansea's campus both at the freshman academy and the high school. Another project that deserves recognition is our recent partnership with NASA called "Growing Beyond Earth". During this, students test the scientific method when conducting experiments with various plant varieties that could be grown in the grow box on the International Space Station. Students are able to speak to astronauts in monthly zoom meetings during the project's duration as well. All data collected is recorded and sent back to NASA in order to help determine which crop would do well in space in order to provide fresh produce during space missions.

While service and agriculture are serious matters of the FFA, we also know a lot about having fun! We enjoy interactive activities at each of our monthly meetings to build fellowship among members. Kickball is one of our favorites (aside from eating great meals)! One event we hope to start this spring and carry on each year is a fishing tournament in remembrance of our chapter's late chaplain, Kenneth "Chase" Cathy, whom we lost in April of 2020.

Swansea FFA is all about making time for building relationships. Whether that be between chapter members, or with our community, we are always up to making new friends and connections.

The 2021 NYFEA Institute Hosted by Indiana

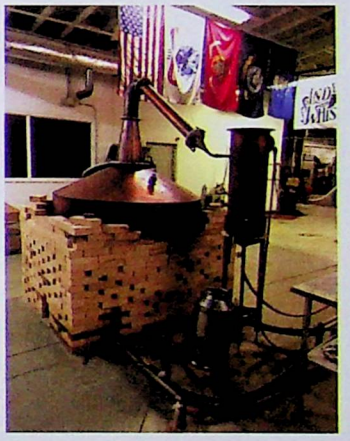
By Troy Helms, portions taken from a press Release provided by NYFEA

South Carolina delegates attending NYFEA National Institute

For 55 years, NYFEA has hosted an annual gathering of people committed to answering the question: "where will we find the next generation of young ag leaders and agricultural professionals?"

After a year away in 2020, farmers from across the nation returned in December to attend the 2021 NYFEA National Institute. The Institute served to provide a unique and educational experience from Fort Wayne, Indiana. The home of rich agricultural land and a history of successful farming operations, the northwestern corner of Indiana provided a beautiful setting for the 2021 program. Two days of tours and a day filled with educational opportunities highlighted this unique experience.

The activities of the week were exciting for the participants. From the cattle to the shopping, people enjoyed the fellowship and hearing the stories. From the music to the candy, people shared new experiences.



Tour stop at Indiana Whiskey Company

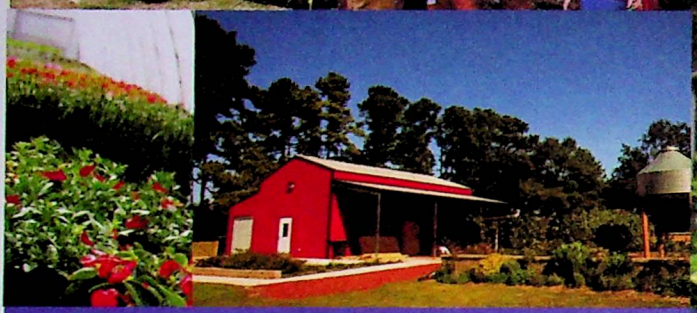
South Carolina was well represented at the National Institute as participants included: Tim Faulkner, Kecia Faulkner, Tim McSwain, Mary Beth McSwain, Ben Teal, Troy Helms and Holly Helms.

South Carolina's own Tim Faulkner served as 2021 NYFEA National President and served a leadership role in putting on the Institute as well as conducting all business meetings and affairs at the convention.

Next year, the National Institute will move to the state of Louisiana and be held in New Orleans. The 2022 Institute will offer chances to truly experience agriculture in other parts of the nation, providing unmatched educational opportunities. The Institute is open to all Farmer and Agribusiness Chapter members, and even provides opportunities for students to participate. For more information or to register to attend, please visit: www.nyfea.org.

Spartanburg Community College

School of Horticulture



SCC's School of Horticulture concentrates on the ornamental side of the industry, teaching everything from greenhouse/nursery production to landscaping and farm-to-table intensive agriculture. Thanks to a widely respected campus arboretum with many gardens, greenhouse production facilities and a center for sustainable agriculture on our campus, SCC students gain hands-on experience with plant production, landscaping, nursery operations, greenhouse management, intensive agriculture and more. SCC's horticulture department has a partnership with Clemson University for students to transfer and receive a bachelor's degree.

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SCC SPARTANBURG COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Sunbelt Ag Expo
It's Great to be Back!

By Troy Helms

The 2021 Sunbelt Ag Expo returned in late October to Moultrie, Ga., after its cancellation last year due to COVID. All of the anticipation of reopening the gates after a year off brought great excitement and joy to all those involved. Visitors to the Expo were eager to visit the many exhibits and see the latest technology and equipment available in the agriculture industry.

As the Sunbelt Ag Expo celebrated 43 years of service to agriculture, they welcomed over 1,200 exhibitors that encompassed 100 acres of exhibit space and represented over 4,000 different product lines. These exhibitors showcased the latest technology to help farmers enhance their economic and environmental sustainability.

During the Expo, the Swisher Sunbelt Expo Southeaster Farmer of the Year 2021 was announced. This year's winner proved to be special for our state as South Carolina's very own Robert "Bob" Martin Hall was introduced as the winner. Hall, owner of Bush-N-Vine Farm, resides in York, S.C. This is the 31st year for the Southeastern Farmer of the Year award. It recognizes excellence in agricultural production and farm management, along with leadership in farm and community organizations.

Before the gates were opened for this year's show, plans were already underway for the 2022 Sunbelt Ag Expo. We hope that you will make plans to join in the excitement as the Sunbelt Ag Expo returns Oct. 18-20, 2022.

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